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THE STRUCTURE AND MEANING OF POLITICAL RELATIONS IN A  
SOUTH INDIAN LITTLE KINGDOM

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# THE STRUCTURE AND MEANING OF POLITICAL RELATIONS IN A SOUTH INDIAN LITTLE KINGDOM\*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The nature of the pre-modern Indian political order has been the subject of much recent rethinking. Reacting against the dichotomous presentation of India's political past as despotic on top and stagnant below, scholars have begun to examine the relationships of the state (its various levels and incarnations) with localities (increasingly defined more broadly as structures of social relations, rather than as the village communities of Marx, Maine and early Indian ethnography) and to propose models better suited for analyzing these relationships. While much progress has been made in supplanting such inappropriate and outworn models as historical bureaucratic empires and feudalism, our understanding of political relations in culturally sensitive terms is still at an early stage. In particular, very little satisfactory work has been done on the social relations within the small states, or "little kingdoms", which have been recognized by scholars such as Bernard Cohn and Louis Dumont<sup>1</sup> as of great importance in the articulation of supra-village networks and as the building blocks of all trans-regional political systems. In this paper I shall attempt to reconstruct

the social and political relations of one south Indian little kingdom using records concerning privileged landholding within that state.

Two recent papers which foreshadow the subject matter of this essay concern as well the significance of privileged land tenure in village India. In one paper, just republished in a collection of his own essays lamenting the legacy of nineteenth century perspectives on the South Asian peasant, Eric Stokes seems unwittingly to continue to mirror some of these nineteenth century views in his understanding of revenue-free lands, or ināms. Stokes writes that "by the beginning of the nineteenth century a long period of disturbed political conditions and unstable central authority had swelled inam to an unnatural extent."<sup>2</sup> As his essay only concerns the nineteenth century, he assumes what is natural and unnatural, and clearly sees the proliferation of ināms as a sign of political weakness and decay. Stokes' analysis of ināms is thus conditioned by his revenue-centered view of the Indian state: "Even so," he writes, the proliferation of ināms "provided no permanent defense against a rapacious revenue demand since this merely pitched up the rates on revenue-bearing land to extreme levels."<sup>3</sup> This zero-sum view of revenue accepts the nineteenth century belief that the state was first and foremost an institution concerned with the extraction of revenue, and neglects altogether the actual requirements of pre-modern political systems in India, where control over land was secondary to control over men, let alone the elasticity of revenue demand. The theory of the state

underlying Stokes' formulation applies rather well to British colonial government in India, but is largely irrelevant to pre-British state systems. Ināms, as I shall argue here, should rather be seen as relational forms of alliance, protection, hierarchy, and incorporation, and as such an important key to the structure and significance of political relations in pre-British India.

In the second paper, Frank Perlin recognizes the structural importance of privileged landholding for articulating various "powerful forms of social dominance transcending the frontiers of the village, and strongly influencing the organization of social, economic, and political life in the countryside."<sup>4</sup> Ināms were not only significant forms of village penetration in their own right, according to Perlin, they also allowed the even more insidious entry into the "very pores of village economic life" of certain dominant families which in the eighteenth century collapsed by their own holdings the dichotomy of village and state. But "the heterogeneous resolution of personal power throughout the countryside"<sup>5</sup> is discussed without any reference to caste, kinship, or for that matter the state as an institution. The full value of his analysis is thus compromised by the lack of cultural and sociological moorings. While Perlin contributes a great deal to our understanding of the relation of village rights to a most convincingly described structure of exploitation and expropriation, he shares with Stokes an unwillingness to situate the social relations he analyzes in a cultural context for fear, I suppose, that this would distort the dynamism of the system and mask the self-interest of its actors. But while both of these authors have

identified important and previously neglected relationships within the Indian countryside, they have neither significantly furthered our understanding of the cultural and institutional character of these relationships nor have they proposed a useful model for characterizing the relation of privileged landholding to the political system.

Perhaps the most intriguing model which has been proposed for analyzing the relation of social structure to political authority is that of the segmentary state. This model was initially developed by Aiden Southall in his work in East Africa<sup>6</sup> to contrast with the unitary state, the definition of which had been drawn largely from Western political theory. In early British political anthropology<sup>7</sup> the absence of such a "unitary state" was interpreted to mean the absence of any state system whatever, and Southall proposed the segmentary state as an intermediate category between these two ideal-typical poles. The model of the segmentary state has subsequently been used by Burton Stein to explain the structure of the medieval south Indian Cōla kingdom<sup>8</sup> and by Richard Fox to account for the political organization of Rajput clans in Uttar Pradesh during the Mughal period.<sup>9</sup> Stein was attracted to the segmentary state because it provided an alternative to the terms "centralized", "bureaucratized", or "feudal" which he felt had been wrongly applied in the Indian context. Fox was attracted principally because of the territorially segmented structure of Rajput clans. Briefly, the characteristics of the segmentary state are (1) limited recognition of territorial sovereignty,

which declines as one moves from center to periphery, (2) the coexistence of a centralized government with peripheral, quasi-autonomous foci of administration, (3) the pyramidal repetition of administrative structures and functions in the peripheral foci, (4) the absence of an absolute monopoly of legitimate force at the center, and (5) shifting allegiances at the periphery of the system.<sup>10</sup> Sovereignty is conceived as dual; the weakness of the power structure is often (that is, during periods of centralization) counteracted by the strength of ritual hegemony, which serves as a sort of legitimating glue.

The viability of the segmentary model, and in particular its applicability to India, has been widely debated, perhaps most systematically in a recent volume of essays edited by Fox. The two most sustained critiques therein were marshalled by Henri Stern and Bernard Cohn.<sup>11</sup> Stern, a Dumontian, contended that the segmentary state model placed undue emphasis on descent and, more particularly, the principle of unilineal filiation, while simultaneously it neglected, at least as it has been applied to India by Fox, affinal relations as a structural factor in lineage organization. Cohn argued that the problem with the segmentary model was that it was constructed "without reference to the sets of meaning people attached to 'political relations'..."<sup>12</sup> By implication this critique would apply equally to Stern's alternative hypothesis, in spite of Stern's contention that Dumont's structuralism is based on indigenous institutions and conceptions. Burton Stein, seeking to defend the theory against such a critique, maintained that the primacy of ritual

sovereignty in the model provided ample scope to consider cultural meaning.<sup>13</sup> Stein insisted, therefore, that the critical test of the model was empirical, but nagging theoretical doubts linger. The analytic separation of state structure from state ritual ignores the diffusion of ritual forms associated with kingship throughout all modes and levels of political relationship, as well as the more fundamental impossibility of isolating a "social structure" uninflected by the meanings of political authority. Thus social, or locality structure can hardly be defined as segmentary if we can identify structures of political relations within the artificially constructed boundaries of our sociological typification. We have already seen that the pattern of village rights was linked to the exigencies of state rule. And, as I shall demonstrate in this paper, the organization of political relations not only affected local structures of dominance, leadership, and ritual, but also neutralized the potential for certain types of culturally acceptable segmentation. One might at least begin the investigation of Indian political systems with the sort of clean slate proposed by Cohn.

But in spite of Cohn's directive the problem which still confronts the historian of India is how to elicit meaning from the past, or more fundamentally, how to identify and select structural features for consideration and how then to evaluate differing interpretations as to their significance in the absence of explicit and directly germane cultural statements. An alternative to Dumont's proposals is suggested by the work of A. M. Hocart,<sup>14</sup> whose emphasis on kingship is especially instructive. Hocart understood the caste system as integrally related to kingship, defined contextually as the center



around which relations of service and incorporation were articulated. He contended that service was at the core of ideas about social relations: "the farmers are feudal lords to whom the others owe certain services."<sup>15</sup> Thus, Hocart's model of the political order was not confined to states: within the village, drummers, barbers, washermen, and potters were all priests, necessary for the ritual structure of the village community. The village community was simply a microcosm of the kingdom, which itself was a ritual system wherein the royal castes performed service to the king. Taken as a whole, Hocart wrote that "the caste system is a sacrificial organization, that the aristocracy are feudal lords constantly involved in rites for which they require vassals or serfs, because some of these services involve pollution from which the lord must remain free."<sup>16</sup> Dumont, who views the "political" as encompassed by the religious principles underlying the caste system, readily accepted the reference to pollution, but reacted strongly against Hocart's general formulation: "Put briefly, even if we accepted the phrase "sacrificial organization" we could not accept its immediate inflection with the particular rites of feudal lords."<sup>17</sup> Dumont objected in particular to the association of ordinary village services and exchanges with the religious principles either of caste or of the sacrifice: "Hocart has elevated one politico-economic relationship to characterize a system of which he himself has emphasized the religious nature."<sup>18</sup> However, it is precisely Hocart's "confusion" of the politico-economic with the religious that contributes to our understanding of social relations within the little kingdom.

While Hocart's theory of caste was rooted in his notion of ritual service, his theory of kingship was based on an understanding of incorporation. Although the primary goal of kingly rituals was the generation of prosperity, the principal function of these rituals was to incorporate the divinities of chieftains into the divinity of the king;<sup>19</sup> in short, to establish meaningful political relations in the context of a distinctively Hindu "divine kingship". The appropriateness of Hocart's examples might be questioned since the royal sacrifices upon which he drew to construct his theory were no longer performed after the eighth century, but Ronald Inden has recently demonstrated that many of the structural features of vedic ritual were reincorporated into the "great gift" (mahādāna) ceremonies which replaced the vedic sacrifice as the principal cosmoregal performance of Indian kings from the eighth century on.<sup>20</sup> Yet, as Inden further argued, these features of vedic ritual underwent various structural transformations; and it is clear from my analysis of Pallava inscriptions that in south India the gift changed and expanded modes of royal incorporation.<sup>21</sup>

Marcel Mauss convincingly demonstrated that the gift was of dominant significance in "primitive" societies.<sup>22</sup> A gift established a relation which was not only created but continually re-created by exchange; one gift established obligation and dependence, a debt which could only be erased by a return gift, which in turn established dependence and obligation. Looked at from a corporate perspective, primitive society was a system of total prestations, in which relations of reciprocity between segmentary units constituted, according to an

interpretation put forward by Sahlins, the basis of integration, solidarity, and peace which political theorists such as Hobbes could attribute only to the state.<sup>23</sup> The parallel of the gift and of the state can be seen in Mauss' notion that the cessation of the gift was commensurate to a declaration of war; as with Hobbes, the underlying nature of society was one of "warre".<sup>24</sup>

But in the little kingdoms of south India (as well as in post-vedic ritual) the structure of exchange was ranked, centralized, and redistributinal rather than reciprocal and segmentary. Sahlins demonstrated that redistribution, or pooling is based on similar principles and operations as reciprocity, but that the nature and structure of relations is fundamentally different:

Pooling is socially a within relation, the collective action of a group. Reciprocity is a between relation, the action and reaction of two parties. Thus pooling is the complement of social unity and, in Polanyi's term, "centricity"; whereas, reciprocity is social duality and "symmetry". Pooling stipulates a social center where goods meet and thence flow outwards, and a social boundary too, within which persons (or subgroups) are cooperatively related. Reciprocity can establish solidary relation, insofar as the material flow suggests assistance or mutual benefit, yet the social fact of sides is inescapable.<sup>25</sup>

According to Sahlins, redistribution can have two functions, one practical

and logistic, the other instrumental. In the latter, redistribution "sustains the corporate structure itself" by serving as a "ritual of communion and of subordination to central authority." Sahlin went on to write that "chiefly pooling generates the spirit of unity and centricity, codifies the structure, stipulates the centralized organization of social order and social action."<sup>26</sup> In other words, chiefly pooling incorporates the various "segments" of society into a single state structure. Although ritual hegemony is part of this process, it is a part embedded in the structural form of redistribution. Redistribution thus becomes the institutional expression of centralized kingship.

The development of the state in south India was in large part the appropriation of privileged rights to land and office by chiefs who then redistributed these rights throughout the full spectrum of society. In Pudukkottai, the little kingdom to be considered in this essay, inscriptions record these developments as little chiefs (araiyars) were accorded rights in exchange for protection and then rose gradually to prominence, some to kingship, as they redistributed their shares of local production to temples, brahmans, monasteries, and to village officers, servants, and soldiers.<sup>27</sup> By the eighteenth century, the alienation of land known as ināṁ was the highest form of chiefly pooling or redistribution. Ināṁs thus became the key structure for the articulation of the ritual primacy of kingship. It is in this sense that the little kingdom was a redistributive process in which the relations developed through and maintained in the gifting of ināṁ land constituted the essential structure of that process.

## II. PUDUKKOTTAI: A SOUTH INDIAN LITTLE KINGDOM

The little kingdom to be described in this paper is Pudukkottai (Putukkōttai; often spelled Poodoocottah in the nineteenth century). Pudukkottai was located in the dry land area between Tanjore and Trichinopoly on the north and Madura on the south. In 1875 the area of the state was estimated as 1,380 square miles and the population as 316,695;<sup>28</sup> the total number of villages was set at 1,580 at roughly the same time.<sup>29</sup> Pudukkottai, which under the British was the only Princely State in the Tamil-speaking region of Madras Presidency, was ruled by kings of the Tondaiman (Tontaimān) family. The Tondaimans, heads of a Kallar clan who, according to their family history (vamcāvali) moved south from the Tirupati hills in the service of the Vijayanagar rulers, emerged in Pudukkottai as two collateral ruling houses in the late seventeenth century. The state only took its modern form when the two houses merged in the middle of the eighteenth century, only fifty years before the British consolidated their control over southern India. Because of the military aid rendered to the British and the Arcot Nawab in the 1752 siege of Trichinopoly, in the wars against Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan, and finally in the operations against rebel chieftains (pālaiyakārar) at the turn of the nineteenth century, the British did not include the Tondaimans in the 1803 Permanent Settlement, which converted such large chiefdoms as Ramnad and Sivagangai to zamindari status. Instead, Pudukkottai was allowed to continue on in an ambiguous but privileged status and was later classified, according to the self-fulfilling principle of precedent, as a native, or princely state.

As a privileged state Pudukkottai was exempted from paying any tax or tribute to the British government. When in 1803 a tract of land was granted to Pudukkottai after a long dispute with Tanjore, the yearly tribute of an elephant was stipulated in the agreement. But this tribute was never paid and was objected to on the grounds that it compromised Pudukkottai's special tribute-free status, and in 1836 it was formally excused. Consequently, the British did not interfere with the revenue structure of the state, and until the late nineteenth century revenue procedures and tenurial arrangements within the state were hardly altered. Most important for understanding traditional political relations, the ināms were left under the control of the state, unlike in the zamindaries where ināms were assumed by the British government at the time of the Permanent Settlement. As a result of the comprehensive records kept during the Pudukkottai Inam Settlement of 1888, we have access to a picture of the structure of alienation which reveals in detail the integral connections between village and state, however changed the content of certain relationships had been by the demilitarization of the larger political system.

### III. INĀMS IN PUDUKKOTTAI: THE STRUCTURE OF ALIENATION

Inām itself is a Persian word, the currency of which in Tamil Nadu had first to do with the presence of the Nawab of Arcot in the eighteenth century, and secondly with the general adoption of Persian terms for revenue matters by the British. There is no single Tamil equivalent for the word inām, and indeed the concentration on land rather than rights and shares is a consequence of Persian and British

preoccupation rather than indigenous cultural categories. In any case, the technical vocabulary in Tamil for alienated land was various, different types of inām being labeled as māniyam, umpalam, jivitam, lavanam, etc., the meanings of which will be explained as they arise in the analysis. In the late nineteenth century in Pudukkottai, over two-thirds of the cultivated land was inām. The other third was land called ayan, or terappu, which denoted that tax was paid to the king. Most of this land was assessed according to the share (amāni) system in which one-ninth of the produce was accorded to village "servants" and four-ninths each to the cultivator and to the government. In the nineteenth century the British commented time and time again that the least prosperous peasants were those who farmed land of this description. Of the ināms, roughly 30 percent were for military retainers, their chiefs, and for palace guards and servants; 25 percent were for village officers, artisans, and servants; and 45 percent were for the support of temples, monasteries (matam in Tamil; matha in Sanskrit), and brahman communities (brahmadēya). This does not include the jāgīrs (jākīr: estates granted to collateral lines), which constituted 35 percent of total inām lands, and which in turn had inām land within them alienated to the same categories as listed above for the state. Two of the jāgīrs were for the support of collateral branches of the Tondaiman Rājā, and between them they accounted for 106 of Pudukkottai's 1,580 villages.<sup>30</sup> The third jāgīr was to provide pin money for the royal women, the mother, wives, and daughters of the Rājā.

In general terms, the inām represents an institutional set of relationships which is best understood as a system of exchange and

redistribution. "Village servants" such as managers, tax collectors, accountants, artisans, barbers, washermen, maintainers of tanks and canals, watchmen, and the priests of village temples; "state servants" such as military retainers and their chiefs, and palace guards and servants; and the institutions of temples, matams, and brahmadēyas all had their local rights constituted and their relationships to the state articulated by the inām. Tax-exempt meant that the king's share (aracu cuventiram), or the top share (mēlvaram), of the lands allocated as inām was redistributed to the inām holders. The full set of exchanges associated with customary payments known generally throughout India as "jajmani" (and as balute in the west) was thus supported by the inām. The village community participated in supporting the set of exchanges by locally set shares, or cuventirams, which in addition to the land were provided as remuneration for village services. The relationship of the state to the village community was articulated in particular through temples and brahmadēyas and by the provision of protection by a "militia" of amarakārars. Of particular importance were certain specially endowed families, most of them members of the same endogamous Kallar subcaste as the Rājā and related by marriage, the heads of which were military chiefs or commanders called Cērvai-kārars (or Cēruvaikārars) and Cardārs. These chiefs were not only granted lands for their own maintenance but also for the support of a specified number of amarakārars. The land given them was quantified by the unit of āl jivitam, the amount of land, variable according to whether it was dry or wet, calculated to support one man (āl means man, jivitam means livelihood; the unit was equivalent



to 2.66 acres of wet land or 10 acres of dry). In leading military expeditions, then, the Cardārs not only commanded royal troops (amarakārars who were maintained by land grants given directly by the state) but also mustered and led their own group of retainers. The number of retainers allocated to the Cardārs was correlated with the perquisites of their position, which in addition to privileged landholding included the allocation of royal honors. As decentralized as the little kingdom appears, the king was the symbolic head of the system of redistribution, which even as it allotted rights to local power configurations underscored the preeminence of the king and the king's rights.

Information available about the disposition of ināms in Pudukkottai comes principally from the records of the 1888 Inam Settlement. The terms and operations of this settlement were based largely upon those devised by the Inam Settlement Commission in Madras Presidency which had undertaken the same task in the 1860s.<sup>31</sup> The classificatory logic of the Commission was basically instrumental; the commissioners were less concerned with understanding the political theory behind ināms than they were with molding tenurial relations to their own political theory, and more specifically with devising expeditious procedures to attain that end. The first concern of the commissioners was to determine whether or not a particular inām entailed a service requirement, and consequent to that whether or not the service could be defined as useful and necessary. Ināms which were for decidedly "religious" purposes were considered to have the sanction of hereditability, a privilege that was ordinarily disallowed.

Underlying the Inam Settlement was the view that all ināms were resumable by the state. Using the indigenous idea that ināms represented the alienation of the king's right, the British assumed the position of the king and maintained that resumption was the logical correlate of alienation. In Pudukkottai, the ambiguous nature of indirect rule made this theory slightly more complicated. But by the 1880s the British had transferred so many of the powers of the king to the Diwan, who not only represented the state but was answerable to the British Political Agent, that in effect the British had as much control over internal policy as in the Presidency. Thus the Inam Settlement not only followed the Madras model, but it was initiated and carried out at the urging of the Presidency government. In his administration report for 1881-82, the Diwan, announcing his intention to undertake the settlement, wrote:

The Government of Madras in reviewing the last Administration Report have remarked that, "The total acreage under 'Inam' (311,054) greatly exceeds the acreage (228,860) at present paying revenue to the Rajah," and add, "The Government have frequently advised that this difference should receive the serious intention of the Pudukkottai authorities, not with any view to confiscatory measures, but in order to enfranchise on suitable quit rents the antiquated service tenements, and generally to bring the others under some such settlement as was effected by the Madras Inam Department."<sup>32</sup>

Curiously, the alienation of such a major portion of Pudukkottai's

revenue paying lands was seen as problematic principally by the British, whose preoccupation with revenue so far exceeded self-interest that even where they had nothing to gain they insisted that the settlement be carried out.

In interpreting the data provided by the Pudukkottai Inam Settlement, we must not only be cautioned against mistaking British classificational theory for pre-British political relations, but we must also take into account the structural changes of the nineteenth century. The pacification of the nineteenth century and the creation of a British revenue state brought about major changes in each level of the political system. Political position was no longer determined by military prowess and success but rather by political relations with the new British overlords, relations defined by British notions of precedence and history, loyalty, and coherence to British standards of stability, management, and gentry-like behavior. Thus the military system which initially played such an important role in Pudukkottai's rise to prominence in the eighteenth century not only became obsolete but was considered by the British as dangerous and wasteful. Even so, Pudukkottai was one of the only south Indian kingdoms in which the militia was not totally dismantled, though it was gradually converted to the uses of a peacetime economy. Amarakārars were assigned the duties of watching the harvest and protecting the state's share of grain while being transported to and stored in the state godowns, necessary tasks because of the amāni system of revenue collection in ayan lands. The military commanders maintained their privileged position in society by virtue of their special relationships to the

Rājā and to their own retainers as well as their extensive landholding rights, though these relations and rights became totally abstracted from the original military context. That the changed basis of relations did not pass without some anxiety was demonstrated most saliently in 1854, when several disaffected palace guards fomented an agrarian rebellion of sufficient seriousness to occasion the movement of British troops into the state. But for the purposes of understanding the nature of the eighteenth century military system, the titles of the military *ināmdārs* remained the same, and though the retainers of old had become in effect village revenue servants, we can still learn the origins of their *inām* grants and discern the basic features of eighteenth century political relations from the entries in the Inam Settlement records.

*Ināms* in Pudukkottai were classified variously throughout the nineteenth century, but by 1880 there was general agreement on classes and definitions between local officials and the British agents. The term "*inām*" was defined in the Rules for the Settlement of Inams simply as meaning "whole villages or small holdings exempt wholly or partially from land-tax."<sup>33</sup> In the settlement rules, nine categories of *inām* were listed: (1) "Devadayam," (2) "Chatrums," (3) "Jaghires," (4) "Brahmadayam," (5) "Oombalam," (6) "Rokkakuthigai," (7) "Amaram," (8) "Ooliems," and (9) "Sundry Inams." Devadāyam lands were said to consist of two classes: first, lands attached to temples (or mosques) which were under direct state management, and second, lands granted to minor temples held by persons who performed worship (*pūja*, or *pūcai*) or who held the management. Lands granted as dharmadāyam for the support of cattirams, feeding houses for pilgrims, and principally for

Brahmans were of the same two classes. The third category, "Jaghires," was excluded from the 1888 Settlement, though by that year the forty-four villages of the Western Palace Jāgīr (Mēl Aranmanai) had been assumed by the state. Brahmadayams (brahmadēyam), or land grants to Brahmans under the heads of sarvamaniem (carvamāniyam) or shrotriem (curōttiriyam), were also divided into two classes: "lands granted hereditarily to Brahmans for subsistence" and "similar lands granted for the performance of some specific service (vritti)."<sup>34</sup> Oombalams (umpalam) were lands held "for actual service rendered or by families of men formerly in service"; rokkakuthigai (rokkakuttikai) were lands held "in lieu of a certain amount of salary"; amarams were held "for military service by men, who are in the remnants of the old militia of the country"; ooliems (ūriyam) were held "for service not strictly military, but in connection with the guarding of the Palaces and escorting members of the Royal Family when they go out"; and sundry ināms "comprised grants of land for the support of Ooranies or Drinking water ponds or water-pundals and the like."<sup>35</sup> The last five classes were said in the Inām rules to be "so mixed up together that it is difficult to draw a distinct line of difference between each."<sup>36</sup> As a result, the categories were divided into five functional groups, having to do with the nature of the service performed. These groups were functionally defined but instrumentally conceived; each classification was correlated with a particular rule for settlement and enfranchisement.

The reasons for the admitted confusion in sorting out inām "tenures" had in part to do with the lack of administrative systematicity in the historical formation of ināms and in part with the nineteenth

century tendency to substantialize titles and words by taking them out of context and fixing permanent meanings to fluid relationships. Indeed, ināms were viewed by the British increasingly as simple types of land tenure involving, for the most part, "service" requirements, not as the institutional forms by which a vast array of undifferentiated rights were constituted and specified. I shall now give examples of the different types of ināms in an attempt to demonstrate the bundle of rights and meanings signified by them. Nonetheless, we must keep in mind that by 1888 the terms of our discourse have been caught up for such a long time in dialectical interaction between the precolonial system and a developing set of colonial assumptions that it is difficult to reconstruct with total purity the relationships of the eighteenth century. Although a number of different sources shall be used, the principal records for the study of ināms are those of the Inam Settlement Faisal Registry. These registers, written out in Tamil during the years of the Inam Settlement in the late 1880s, contain an entry for every inām in the state, of which there were over 13,000. The entries list particulars about the nature and history of the inām, the extent settled and the excess measured, and the classification and consequent rate and amount of quit-rent assessed on the inām. The histories of the ināms were based on the statements and records filed by ināmdars and on an examination of the presettlement records by the settlement officers.

#### IV. THE COURT AND THE MILITARY

Perhaps the most "mixed up" category of all ināms was that of ūriyam, which was the classification for lands held by a wide variety

of people who rendered service. Indeed, ūṛiyam means service; the definitions in the Madras Lexicon range from "service due to a deity, a guru, or a superior by birth" to "natural obligation." Although by the late nineteenth century the principal reference of ūṛiyam was to those who rendered service in or to the palace (either of the Rājā or of the Jāgīrdārs), ūṛiyam also was used for ināms held by those who guarded crops under amāni cultivation, as well as by village servants such as barbers, washermen, carpenters, and smiths. These latter ināms were also called kuṭi umpaḷam, kuṭi meaning village community and umpaḷam being glossed usually as land held tax-free for the performance of services. Indeed, what separates the two types of ūṛiyakārars from a terminological standpoint seems to be that palace servants held land called jivitam, or āl jivitam, the same unit held by amarakārars and Cērvaiakārars, rather than umpaḷams, although the lands of some of the Cērvaiakārars and Cardārs were called attavanai umpaḷam even though the extent was specified in āl jivitams. It must also be noted that ūṛiyams also applied to some ināms for customary services to temples, such as pulling temple cars on festival occasions, as well as to the obligations of non-inām landholders to perform similar services.

However, when I refer to ūṛiyakārars in this section I am following the settlement classification of ināmdārs who performed services in and for the palaces of the state. Such ūṛiyakārars guarded the palace, provided escorts for the royal family when on tour, served betel nut to the Rājā and to his guests, performed sundry services in the palace, and beat the forests for the Rājā's hunt. There was

considerable range in status among ūṛiyakārars, from head palace guards to menial servants. Twenty-eight ūṛiyakārars were listed in a palace list of 1802;<sup>37</sup> of them, Ūṛiyaṇ Murukaiyaṇ Cērvaikāraṇ held 477 āḷ jivitams, Vēnkannaṇ Cērvai held 254 āḷ jivitams, Ārumukam Cērvai held 119, and of the rest eight held between 35 and 100 āḷ jivitams and the remaining sixteen held from two to seventeen āḷ jivitams. Interestingly, only the three above-named ūṛiyakārars had the suffix Cērvaikārar or Cērvai, which as we noted means, inter alia, commander. Some of the lesser ūṛiyakārars had titles such as Aṭappaṇ, which means betel nut, and suggests the occupation of serving betel nut in the palace. The Cērvaikārars were the officers of the palace guard. The eponymous descendent of Vēnkannaṇ Cērvaikārar was the principal leader of the 1854 rebellion; in that same year he was described by the then political agent, Parker, as a member of "a class of menial servants, who are somewhat lower than the amarakārs and will eat what has been left by others. They are employed now in much the same duty, such as watching the Gates of the Palace, and this person is an officer among them."<sup>38</sup> The idiom employed here illustrates the caste nature of the ūṛiyakārar group and the relative lowness of it, though the officers were superior members. However, on the basis of other records from 1854 I would question whether officers such as Vēnkannaṇ were ever seen as lower than amarakārars, who held much less land and would have been incapable of leading a generalized agrarian revolt. Perhaps indeed one of the reasons for Vēnkannaṇ's active involvement in the 1854 rebellion was ambivalent nature of his own structural position in the little kingdom.

Far more numerous -- and if we accept Parker's statement



higher in status -- than the ūṛiyakārars were the amarakārars, the so-called militia of Pudukkottai state. Amaram was the term used for military "tenure" under Vijayanagar, though apparently the amaranāyakas (lords/commanders of amarams) were closer to the position of "chiefs" than "retainers."<sup>39</sup> In a letter written in 1807 to the Governor-General, the British Resident William Blackburne described the military system as it operated in Pudukkottai:

The largest portion of the [alienated] land was held by individuals on the condition of leading into the field when called upon a certain number of peons and supporting all their expenses during their service, excepting a very small allowance from the Government as Batta. The advantageous nature of the tenure to the tenants is proved by the punctuality and readiness with which they have fulfilled the conditions of it, even when required to march with their quotas to distant provinces and to serve for many months there at considerable expense. The number of peons which Tondiman could bring into the field under this tenure was 7,983.<sup>40</sup>

In 1854, the number of "peons" was estimated at 3,375,<sup>41</sup> and by 1888 one calculation suggested that there were still 2,635 amarakārars in the state.<sup>42</sup> Although in the nineteenth century they no longer performed military duties, in the eighteenth century amarakārars were both soldiers and cultivators. More accurately, they were cosharers (paṅkālis) in patrilineages which would provide one man for military

service when called. The inām was registered in the name of one man, usually, though not always, the eldest son of the previous ināmdār, but was "enjoyed" by the group of coparceners. For instance, in one case an amaram inām was entered in the name of one man, but was shared by nine pañkāḷis, which included all the live males in a patrilineage of four generation's depth.<sup>43</sup> Sometimes there was a division among pañkāḷis, as in a case where an original amaram of three āl jivitams had been divided by two brothers into two ināms of 1.5 āl jivitams each.<sup>44</sup> Although in theory each inām was one āl jivitam, in fact there was considerable variance, ranging on the average from a half to five āl jivitams. From the names in the records it appears that most of the amarakārars were of the Kaḷḷar, Valaiyaṇ, Maravar, and Akamuṭaiyār castes, in roughly that order of incidence, though because of the variable and overlapping significance of titles according to context it is impossible to tell with any great certainty the meaning of a name.

There were two basic types of amarams, those attached to chieftains (Vakappu Cērvaikārars) called Inavaṛi Amarams (this is the type referred to in the above quote of Blackburne) and those attached directly to the state called Kirāmavari Amarams. Inavaṛi means patriline; unfortunately the records do not provide information sufficient to determine whether or not the inavaṛi amarakārars belonged to the same caste and lineage as their Vakappu Cērvaikārars. Kirāmavari means "of a village" (kirāmam); and these amarakārars were directly appointed and controlled by the Rājā. There were also a number of amarakārars who were attached to the Jāgīrdārs. In the 1802 Palace lists, there were 867.12.0 āl jivitams<sup>45</sup> attached to the Cinnaranmanai

Jāgīr, 2914.3.2 āḷ jivitams granted through Cērvaiḱārars as inavari, and 3562 āḷ jivitams granted in villages by the rulers directly as kirāmavari. At the time of the Inam Settlement of 1888, there were 1,373 amarams under Cērvaiḱārars and Jāgīrdārs and 1,262 amarams under the direct control of the Rājā.<sup>46</sup>

Although the inavari amarakārars were appointed and controlled by the Vakappu Cērvaiḱārars, the ultimate authority for all amarakārars was the Rājā. Whether or not this authority was actively exercised in the eighteenth century, there is evidence from the nineteenth century that the Rājā did indeed exert his control. This evidence comes from the amaram succession registers, called amara lavana pativus, records which had been kept for many years independently of the Inam Settlement. These registers, maintained by the king's officers, recorded the procedures followed and the decisions made concerning the succession of amaram ināms. On the death of an amarakārar, the jivitams enjoyed by him were placed under attachment by the state until the successor was appointed, if a suitable heir was found. I have found examples of this for both kirāmavari and inavari amarakārars in registers from 1860. In fact, I have found one case where an amarakārar who held 2.8.0 āḷ jivitams under Kannanūr Cērvaiḱārar and was dismissed by the Cērvaiḱārar on the grounds that he participated in a conspiracy (apparently the 1854 rebellion) was reinstated by the king's officers. My translation of the pativu entry reads:

But there are no records to prove that he was a participant of the said conspiracy. The appellant has presented a petition in the year Ananta (1854) to the Cirkar [government] but it has

not been considered until now. There are no records to show that the appellant was involved in the conspiracy. It is therefore believed that the Cērvaiḱārar has dismissed him out of ill feeling and assumed his jivitams. Hence the Cērvaiḱārar's case is dismissed and the jivitams are hereby restored to the petitioner -- signed, the Sirkele [Diwan] and the Karbar, dt. 12 August 1861.

Such a decision is consistent with the view that the king was the source of all alienation and the center of the system of redistribution.

The dominant political relations of the king were with the chieftains, the Cērvaiḱāraras, who held approximately half of the amarakāraras under them. The probable etymology for Cērvaiḱārar was from Cēru, the verb "to join," thus meaning adherents, or those who are attached to, in this case, the king. Vakappu means class or group, and apparently referred to the group of amarakāraras controlled by the Cērvaiḱārar. These chieftains were also called Cardār, or Cirdār, which comes from the Persian word for commander and was added to the Tamil political lexicon as a military title in some Tamil areas after the rise to power of the Arcot Nawab in the early eighteenth century. Lesser chieftains, usually those who did not have a class of amarakāraras under them, were sometimes called Kurikārar, the probable etymology here being from kuri, to aim, the title thus meaning "marksman." The title Cērvaiḱārar was used throughout the southern Tamil region. In 1799, the Collector of Tinnevely wrote that there were "head inhabitants, as were men of ability and ambition, [who] easily acquired considerable influence, and by retaining parties of peons became to be considered

active sherogars."<sup>47</sup> The Collector went on to note that the most successful of these "sherogars" (Cērvai<sub>k</sub>ārars) subsequently became "poligars" (pālaiyakārars). In a court case of 1861 in the Tinnevely Zamindari of Ettaiyapuram, it was observed that, "the office of Servagar appears to be one of authority, imply the command of one hundred men."<sup>48</sup> Fifty years later the imperial ethnographer Thurston wrote that "Sērvai<sub>k</sub>ārān" was the usual caste title for Akām<sub>u</sub>taiyans.<sup>49</sup> Apparently he took his information from the Ramnad area where many of the commanding chieftains in the Cetupati's army had been of this caste. Since Thurston this title, or its shortened form Cērvai, has been considered by most observers as a caste title, although the particular caste changed depending on the area being talked about: in Tanjore the title was used predominantly by Kallars, though several other groups adopted the title as well;<sup>50</sup> in Tinnevely certain sub-groups of Maravars, in particular those who were the servants of maravar zamindars, bore the title;<sup>51</sup> in Ramnad the Akām<sub>u</sub>taiyars have carried the title, though it has been used among some Maravars as well;<sup>52</sup> and in Pudukkottai the title was used mostly by Kallars, though it has been used by some other groups as well including the above-mentioned two and the Valaiyans.<sup>53</sup> In an eighteenth century ballad from Pāñcālankuricci in eastern Tinnevely District the title of Cērvai<sub>k</sub>ārār was even used by a number of Kampalattār-s, a Telegu caste which also happened to be the caste of the local pālaiyakārār, Kattapommu.<sup>54</sup>

These examples suggest that titles were used in a number of ways both to specify position and to express identity. It seems likely that the twentieth century understanding of caste titles

is based on the special conditions of this century, in which the nature of the political superstructure has undergone immense change. The relation of caste to politics in the modern world has been articulated by the objectification of the census<sup>55</sup> and by the political mobilization of caste associations.<sup>56</sup> The relationship of the political order to the social world was far more integral in the eighteenth century; chieftains had titles which simultaneously expressed their relation to the king and their identity with particular groups. Mobility within society was linked to mobility within the political order, and the titles used expressed relations that were as fluid as the nature of local political stability. The breakdown of the old political order was accompanied by a substantialization of titles such that caste has been belatedly attributed with an autonomous logic and an infrastructural fixity. The suggestions of Hocart are helpful here. Hocart noticed the fine line between proper names and titles; he gave many examples of the incorporation of titles into personal names and even proposed that perhaps personal names as such can not be said to have existed until relatively recently.<sup>57</sup> Hocart further noticed a tendency for a headman's titles to spread to the whole caste.<sup>58</sup> Tracing this back to the classical period, he noted that, "Not only the king, but members of the royal caste are there called Rajahs."<sup>59</sup> Dumont, who followed Hocart in this area, noted the replication of titles in their use by the western branch of Kallars, the Pramalai Kallar who settled to the west of Madurai. According to Dumont, the caste title of Tēvar had three usages: first, it referred generally to all the Pramalai Kallars; second, it referred to lineage chiefs; and third, in its most restricted usage, it referred to the headman or chief of the caste.<sup>60</sup> The title of Cervaikārar seems clearly to have been a political

title, variably meaning chief or commander, which spread through the development of certain types of political relations, and which finally became fixed as a caste title for different martial castes in different regions of southern India.

In Pudukkottai the relation of the Cērvai<sup>̄</sup>karars to the Rājā was both social and political. In 1802 there were fifteen Vakuppa Cērvai<sup>̄</sup>karars; by the late nineteenth century there were only seven. Of those seven who remained, all were Kallars, and all but one were of the same patrilineage (pattapeyar -- literally meaning; "the name of a title"); but being of the same sub-caste (nātu -- which also means territory) they were all potential affines. The one Cērvai<sup>̄</sup>karar who was of a different sub-caste had been granted by the Ramnad Cē<sup>̄</sup>tupati to the Tondaiman's service in the late seventeenth century as an expression of alliance, both political and social, as the first Tondaiman's sister had apparently married the Ramnad Cē<sup>̄</sup>tupati some years before. Among the Ampu Nā<sup>̄</sup>ttu Kallar Cērvai<sup>̄</sup>karars all but Pōram Pallavarāyar and his younger brother, Annacami Pallavarāyar, stressed, in the Inam Settlement records, an actual affinal tie (pantuttuvam), though the Pallavarāyar family did finally contract a marriage tie with the Tondaiman's family some years thereafter. There were six lesser chiefs called Kurik<sup>̄</sup>karars who were all Kallars but of different sub-castes and therefore without the possibility of establishing a pantuttuvam with the royal family. Thus, the line of differentiation between Vakuppu Cērvai<sup>̄</sup>karars and other lesser chieftains was for the most part based on membership in the royal clan, although the exception is important because it suggests the multiple criteria for inclusion. Indeed, kinship was one but not the only constitutive factor in political relations. And, to further complicate the matter, there

was only an uncertain fit between the use of titles as political and social indicators. Only one of the Vakappu Cērvaiḱārars actually used Cērvaiḱār as his pattapeyar, whereas three of the six Kurikārars did. Among all ināmdārs, only amarakārars, ūriyakārars and the above-mentioned chiefs used the title at all as a name suffix, though only some of them did so. For amarakārars for whom a genealogy was included in the inām records, the use of the title was variable and obviously depended on more either than a kinship rule on the one hand or a rule of official designation on the other.

The position of Cērvaiḱār was sufficiently important that the title and the inām could not be divided. Succession usually went to the eldest son, though there was no rule of primogeniture. If there was no suitable heir, succession went to a collateral member of the patrilineage. Interestingly, succession of the collateral kind was done by using adoption to single out the selected heir, and this kind of adoption was quite frequent among ināmdārs in the nineteenth century. Because the title of Cērvaiḱār included the full allocation of āl jivitams for inavari amarakārars and for personal maintenance and honors, a portion of the estate, called the ulkatai lavanam, was set apart for the maintenance of the second son, when there was one. Succession to the ulkatai lavanam was mediated by relation to the incumbent Cērvaiḱār rather than by descent; thus when there were two potential heirs for Cērvaiḱār the unsuccessful one was accorded the ulkatai lavanam rather than any heir by descent. It should be noted that the families of Cērvaiḱārars had sufficient local privilege and power so that the unlucky heirs were not totally abandoned; there was land and perhaps a pension for them in any case. And there was no hard and fast rule that only one collateral relation could be supported



by the Cērvai lavanam itself. Indeed, there was even one case where the division of an inām led to two brothers both becoming Vakappu Cērvaikārars, as happened with the Pallavarāyars. The point to be made here is simply that succession to the title of a Cērvai inām was usually based on descent and that related maintenance support was based on collaterality.

The distribution of Cērvaikārars illustrates both the political geography as well as the strategic borders of eighteenth century Pudukkottai. Five Cērvaikārars were placed in Tirumayyam Taluk near the southern border with Ramnad (with whom Pudukkottai was not always an ally). The four Anjunilaiparru Kurikārars (all of whom were of the same sub-caste, Unjanai Nāttu, and lived in close contiguity with each other) were located in the northwestern Kolattūr Taluk near the border with Trichinopoly, and they were flanked by the two Pallavarāyar brothers. Interestingly, with the only exception of the Anjunilaiparru group, the Cērvaikārars were all placed outside of their own Kallar Nātus. Of these, only the Anṭakkulam Cērvaikārar was situated inside a Kallar Nātu at all, though not his own. The Kallar Nātus were distributed relatively evenly through Kolattūr and Alankuti taluks, and presumably provided a band of loyalty (with the occasional exception of the Vicinki Nāttu Kallars who, though sometimes loyal, had the reputation for fierce independence -- these were the "Cullaries" who made the British Sepoys squirm with terror when they camped and marched south from Trichinopoly<sup>61</sup>) bordering both the Trichy and Tanjore country. Thus, the territorially segmented structure of Kallar sub-castes was not the base for a homologically segmented political structure; rather

relations were centralized and were apparently intended to neutralize political threats from other Kallar chieftains and subcastes.

Insignias called pirutu-s (biruda in Sanskrit) were an essential component of the structure of privileged landholding for chiefs. Pirutus were emblems, or honors, which signified rank and which were used during public processions and in particular when the Cērvaiḱārars came to the palace for state occasions such as Dassara. Examples of pirutus were horses, umbrellas, torches, palanquins, drums, swords, spears, shields, chowries (fly whisks), and page boys. Persons were needed to bear most of the emblems during processions, and each of these personal attendants was allocated āl jivitams as part of the inām. For example, in the case of Ilantāri Muttuvijaya Ampalakārar,<sup>62</sup> it was written explicitly that one third of the Cērvaiḱārar's inavari amarakārars were the emblem-bearers, such as stable boys to tend the processional horses, drummers to herald the march of the chief, torch bearers, umbrella holders, etc. Each faisal entry, not only the 1888 faisals but the earlier ones consulted during the settlement, listed the pirutus and the amount of land given for their support. In addition, it was customary that chieftains were sent special honors from the king on occasions such as marriages; for example Antakkulam Uṭaiyappa Mannavēlār Cērvaiḱārar, on marriages in his family, was sent the following honors from the palace: (1) an elephant with a silver howdah; (2) a horse; (3) a palanquin; (4) a small drum (cinna melam); (5) a big drum (peria melam); (6) cloth from the palace; (7) a carriage; (8) a carpet; and (9) lustres and gloves.<sup>63</sup>

Pirutus were very often the subjects of disputes, for example between the Pallavarāyar brothers when the question of the

partibility of pirutus came up when the estate was divided.<sup>64</sup> Most often the dispute was with the Rājā. Pirutus were all granted by the Rājā and were expressive of a political relationship with him. The emblems were symbolic of kingship, and while they manifested the chieftain's local authority -- a partial sharing of kingly substance -- they could also constitute a serious challenge to the king if displayed without royal permission. This royal perquisite illustrated the king's role in arbitrating rank within the kingdom; particularly as the Cērvaiṅkarars were specifically ranked according to the pirutus allowed them by the king.<sup>65</sup>

#### V. THE JĀGĪRS

As noted above, approximately one third of all inām land land was alienated in the form of three jāgīrs or estates, two to collateral branches of the royal family and one for the expenses of the royal women. Vijaya Raghunātha Rāya Tondaiman granted the two jāgīrs to his brothers when he acceded to the throne in 1730 after a violent succession dispute between himself and his uncle (the former king's younger brother) and in the wake of a history of collateral division and rivalry. The creation of the jāgīrs, the Cinnaranmanai and the Mēlaranmanai, can thus be seen as an attempt to neutralize two potential rivals to the throne. Indeed, collateral relations appear to have been characterized by two conjoining yet conflicting principles: the first, the solidarity of brothers, represented by the undivided family, and the second, the potential for serious fraternal rivalry, represented by the divided family. Apparently, the first principle prevailed more or less throughout the eighteenth century; the nineteenth century, however, was a different story, though by then

the demilitarization of political action rendered fraternal conflict less explosive.

Most quarrelsome of all was the Mēlaranmanai Jāgīrdār of the last half of the nineteenth century, by his own spelling M. R. R. Ratha Kristna Tondiman Sahib. In case after case he contested his subordinate relation to the king; and in each of these cases he highlighted the structural problems of that relationship. Within each jāgīr there was a structure of alienation which paralleled the state at large, with service ināms in the villages and ūriyakārars and amarakārars in the service of the palace. Although the Jāgīrdārs appear to have had considerable autonomy, the alienation of land by them within the jāgīrs was explicitly prohibited in the nineteenth century,<sup>66</sup> and there were instances when the Rājā interfered in the local concerns of the ināms and ināmdārs. For example, when in 1857 one Gōpālan Cērvai kārar complained to the Cirkar that his jivitam villages had been taken away by the Jāgīrdār for no discernible reason, the Cirkar responded by taking the villages under attachment.<sup>67</sup> The Jāgīrdār then complained in turn that it had for a long time been in his power to resume the jivitam and umpalam lands in cases where the ināmdars behaved "improperly" towards him and that the particular resumption had been, "in pursuance of this long-standing custom." The Political Agent finally decided that whereas it was wrong of the Cirkar to attach the lands, since in either case it had no right to the usufruct, the Cirkar did have the right to intervene in the dispute and arbitrate either in favor of the Jāgīrdār or the Cērvai kārar.

In many of his complaints, the Mēlaranmanai Jāgīrdār based his position on his descent, which he claimed gave him an equal right to

the throne and thus equal rights as the Rājā. This was illustrated most succinctly in disputes over honors. In one case, the Jāgīrdār wrote:

At the time of the separation from the State of the aforesaid Jaghires, the original owners thereof had and exercised as a hereditary privilege, several of the marks of honor then used by the Ruling Rajah... I am a member of the family to which His Excellency belongs and the matter whose disposal is required is one which concerns me not as a subject but as a descendent and member of the Royal family.<sup>68</sup>

The Raja in turn complained repeatedly that the Jāgīrdār used, "insignias which were never bestowed upon him by me and which would be highly improper in him to use against my express concurrence."<sup>69</sup> For instance, in 1863 the Jāgīrdār "caused his sword to be borne by his men to his palace thro' the public streets of the town accompanied by Chamars and Chourees, etc." without the Rājā's permission. The relations between the Rājā and the Jāgīrdār were dominated by disputes such as these, all of which occasioned first the Diwan and often the Political Agent to arbitrate. The Political Agent acted by searching for precedent; the Diwan emphasized the prerogative of the Rājā to decide matters of honor, which were deemed of the highest significance. In a dispute of 1867 the Rājā himself provided an explanation to the Political Agent for the perceived importance of honors:

I need not dwell upon the tenacity with which the distinctions of caste and national privileges of rank

and dignity are held by the natives of India; as from your long residence in India, and knowledge of the social character of its people, you are too well acquainted with them. You are doubtlessly aware that there are certain insignias of royalty peculiar to the dignity of this State, as well as in other Native States, which if assumed by others not entitled to them is deemed a direct insult derogatory to the Authority and Dignity of the Head of the State. . . .

In this particular case, which concerned the use of certain musical instruments on the occasion of a marriage procession, the investigations of the Sirkele on behalf of the Political Agent led to a decision against the Rājā, for the reason that all of the named instruments had been used on prior occasions without the specific permission of the Rājā.<sup>71</sup> Thus precedent, rather than the on going authority of the king prevailed. Ironically, the Rājā's claim paralleled the reasoning of the British Government when they argued that all ināms, even hereditary ones, were theoretically reversionary to the State, which though it alienated rights never alienated its own right to rescind those rights or alter them. Again, the genius of the British was to abstract elements of custom out of context and mold them convincingly to the imperial interest.

The Manovarti Jāgīr was granted by Rājā Vijaya Raghunātha Tondaiman sometime during his reign between 1789 and 1807.<sup>72</sup> Four villages were thus designated for the support of the Rājā's three wives, one for each and the fourth for all three together. The jāgīr was passed down to the wives of succeeding kings; thus the

usufructuary rights were based on position rather than heredity. Succeeding kings added villages to the jāgīr, until in 1840 the jāgīr consisted of twenty-five villages. When in subsequent years four villages were resumed from that number, the Rājā paid Rs. 6000 in state funds as compensation each year. When Marthanda Bhairava Tondaiman attempted to assume the jāgīr at the turn of the twentieth century, for the reason that at the time there were no women in the royal family, the British objected not to the principle of resumption but to its recipient. The Political Agent dismissed the Rājā's claim that the resumed land should become the Rājā's personal property; he claimed first that the Rājā could no longer be said to have full enough powers "to perform an act of State of this nature," and second, that the vital distinction between the Rājā and the state meant that in any case a resumption of state would accrue to state lands. Thus, by the end of the nineteenth century, the separation of person and office was complete; the Rājā was a pensioner (albeit of symbolic importance) of a newly created "State," which had appropriated the Rājā's powers to its own uses.

## VI. VILLAGE SERVICE INĀMS

Inām lands granted to village servants and officers were variously called umpalam, kuṭi umpalam, and māṇiyam (which, like umpalam, means land which is held tax-free, and can also mean a hereditary right or privilege -- it, presumably from its sanskrit etymology, māṇya, also entails honor, as can be noted for example from the use of carvamāṇya for some grants to Brahmans for maintenance). These ināms covered the full range of culturally necessary services to the village community. The services were supported both by the inām lands and by cuventirams, or specified shares of the village harvest, which

in Pudukkottai constituted on the average between ten and twelve percent of grain production.

Ūrani māniyams were granted for maintaining and operating irrigational tanks, canals, and sluices. In Pudukkottai this was of particular importance because of the dependence of agriculture on tanks for irrigation. A dry-land area with no perennial rivers, there were almost four thousand tanks, which were connected together to form 146 interlocking systems.<sup>73</sup> This entire infrastructure was organized and supported by inām.

Village service ināms were also held by village officers such as mirāsīdars. Mirās, an arabic word used more or less interchangeably with the Tamil kāniyāṭci, was a general term which originally signified inheritance. In the early nineteenth century, mirās designated to British officials a variety of rights "all more or less connected with the proprietary possession, or usufruct, of the soil, or of its produce," and which were often held jointly.<sup>74</sup> Baden-Powell wrote that mirāsī villages were joint villages found principally in Chingleput, North and South Arcot, Tanjore, and Tinnevely Districts, and attributed their origin either to special colonization or the growth of noble families or of grantees under a state organization.<sup>75</sup> Mirāsīdars held shares (paṅku) of rights over village land and production, and control was vested variably according to a number of possible schemes with the body of shareholders or with individuals.<sup>76</sup> To those who have studied nineteenth century revenue records for the Tamil area it appears that mirāsīdars were overwhelmingly Brahmans and Vellāḷars.<sup>77</sup>

In Pudukkottai, mirāsī service seems principally to have consisted of collecting government taxes and acting as government agent



for all village revenue concerns; though in some villages mirāsī duties included the protection of the temple and the maintenance of irrigational facilities.<sup>78</sup> In one village for which there are detailed records there were ten mirāsīdārs, who held their land severally but had held it jointly in the past.<sup>79</sup> Each of the mirāsīdārs shared their holding with their own paṅkāli group, though mirāsī services did not rotate within those groups. At least two of the mirāsīdārs held other ināms besides mirās. The inām was principally wet-land (tank-fed), and it is perhaps not without accident that one of the ināmdārs held a ūraṇi māṇyam in addition to his mirāsī umpalam. It is probable that the ten mirāsīdārs and their coparceners constituted a dominant group in the community, but beyond this it is impossible to be more specific because of the restricted provenance of the inām data. All ten of the mirāsīdārs were Kallars, thereby suggesting a relationship between local patterns of political and social dominance; indeed, mirāsīdārs clearly were key intermediaries between the king and the village. The Inām Settlement had the effect of limiting the number needed to perform the actual revenue duties, and such bureaucratic rationalization appears to have detached the mirāsī right from its traditional context of generalized dominance.

The position of mirāsīdār was prestigious not only because of the land of the inām, but because the position had perquisites attached to it, in particular certain "respects." The respects were in fact seen to be the most important feature of the inām. In one case there was a serious dispute between brothers over mirāsī respects. The complaining mirāsīdār said that although he performed all the duties of the position, he shared the usufruct of the umpalam lands with his

brother "just as any natural brother does of common family property." But respects was another matter altogether. As he wrote in his petition:

- (1) I am the elderly: I should enjoy the respects.
- (2) I am the Pattadar: He may be my equal but I am the first or foremost among equals. In my absence he may take my place, but when I am present, I am entitled to respects and not he.
- (3) For not one day in his life has the said Muthupalani enjoyed any respects whatever. I have been enjoying it throughout and adversely too to him.
- (4) As a rule, and as is the practice obtaining among other mirasdars, the Pattadar alone is entitled to respects.<sup>80</sup>

Thus, respects or honors rather than land were seen to constitute the office; the respects also served to maintain the indivisibility of a title within the tradition of shared rights among paṅkālis.

Other records suggest that although the mirāsīdārs had an important role in organizing village rights and responsibilities, the relationship of mirāsīdārs to other village servants and artisans was mediated by the state. In one particular case a group of mirāsīdārs, though they claimed the right as their own, had to apply to the Cirkar to change a village artisan, and did so only after receiving the Cirkar's permission. Indeed, the Cirkar not only approved this dismissal of a carpenter deemed disobedient by the mirāsīdārs but upon the representations of the carpenter later reconsidered its decision and ordered his reappointment.<sup>81</sup>

Village service ināms were granted to village servants such as barbers and washermen. One inām was granted to the village barber (ampattan) for serving the village as a barber and for decorating mud horses in the local Aiyandar temple on festival occasions.<sup>82</sup> Another inām was given to a washerman (vannan) for decorating the temple chariot of the deities and for supplying torn cloth for torches during processions in the months of Cittirai and Ātipūram at the Tirukkōkarnam temple (the royal temple).<sup>83</sup> Vettimai service was also supported by inām; this was the service of the head (vettiyār) of the Paraiyar caste who was responsible for organizing the village service of that community and who was himself often the town crier.<sup>84</sup>

Village service ināms were also granted to local artisans. There were ināms for potters who provided pots for the village, local temples and ritual occasions, cattirams and jāgīr palaces;<sup>85</sup> there were ināms for carpenters for services to villages and temples, in one case the latter service consisting of fitting up temple cars for festivals;<sup>86</sup> and there were similar ināms for blacksmiths.<sup>87</sup> Sometimes the service was only for the village, sometimes only for the temple, but often service to both was specified. Some ināms called arttamāniyam (artta means half) were shared equally by two different artisans; and some by the same name were held by one artisan for two separate services.<sup>88</sup>

Another group of village service ināms had exclusively to do with services (ūriyams) to local temples. One inām for kūttāti service was shared by three paṅkālis who respectively played mattalam (tambourine), the tavil (large hand-held drum), and danced the kūttu (a kind of folk dance-drama) during two yearly festivals.<sup>89</sup> A similar inām was granted for dancing and acting a particular drama (līla) on the closing days of

festivals in two local Aiyandar temples.<sup>90</sup> Ināms were granted for other services to temples, for example on caṅku (conch) umpalam entailed blowing the conch, making flower garlands, sweeping the floor of the temple, and guarding the temple.<sup>91</sup> Other ināms were given for bearing temple dieties during processions, dragging temple cars, putting up sheds and bearing torches during festivals, as well as for cleaning vessels and performing other "menial" tasks in temples.<sup>92</sup>

Ināms called māṇiyams were also given to pūcaris for ritual services in temples. Some of the major copper plates recorded grants by Tondaiman rulers to such temple servants; for example, one plate recorded the grant of land along with the makamai (certain dues) therefrom, "for the conduct of pūcai (pūja) and festivals to the Lord Kōkarnesa and his consort Brihaṭambāl in the Tirukōkarnam temple."<sup>93</sup> [Kōkarnesa was a form of Civa, the husband of Brihaṭampāl, the goddess of the Tondaiman family and the Ampu Nattu sub-caste. The temple which housed these "state deities was in Tirukōkarnam.] For less important temples, small ināms were given for specific ritual services and for the provision of materials necessary for those rituals. One ināmdār reported to the Inam Commission that in return for his grant he, every Tuesday, purchased a mud pot, filled it with water, burned incense and camphor, and performed pūja with plantain offerings, in addition to which on four festival days of the year he offered a goat and poṅkal (sweet rice). This particular ināmdār also held a caṅku māṇiyam and a nantavana māṇiyam (ināms for blowing the conch and for tending a flower garden).<sup>94</sup> Another ināmdār was reported by the Commission to perform,

pūjas two times a day in the temple with one measure of

rice, 1/8th measure of oil and other articles such as camphor, incense, turmeric, perfumes, betel and nuts worth 0.1.0 anna for each pūja. He incurs an extra expenditure on festival days such as 1/2 Rupee on Tipāvali, 1 Rupee on Civanrāttiri and 3/4<sup>th</sup> Rupee on Navarattiri.

Thus, even small locality temples were linked to the king through the ināms. Indeed, the temple must be viewed as an institution which was an integral part of the village community. Not only did many ināms include service to both the village and the temple, but service to the temple was in many respects structurally equivalent to service to the village community; since the ritual system of the village was organized through the temple. The question of the relationship of the structure of local patronage to patterns of temple endowment remains, however, important and unanswered by his material.

As we have seen, A. M. Hocart pointed out the myriad interconnections which linked the constituent parts of the village community together and which in turn linked the village to the state. Hocart saw each village service group as a priesthood and thus realized the continuity between the mundane services of barbers and washermen and the ritual performances of priests. Indeed, Hocart wrote, "the barber and the washerman, like the drummers are not so much technicians as priests of low grade,<sup>96</sup> . . . potters sometimes officiate as priests in temples of village goddesses and of the god Aiyanar,<sup>97</sup> . . . (and) carpenters make the temple car in return for grants of land."<sup>98</sup> These kinds of instances led to Hocart's emphasis on service and lordship as the articulating principles of Indian politico-ritual communities. The relation of the village to the state was based on the development of kingship, which centralized social

relations and organized the complex of ritual services.

## VII. RELIGIOUS AND CHARITABLE INAMS

We have yet to describe three of the most important categories of ināms: Brahmadeyam, Devadāyam, and Dharmadāyam, or gifts in land to Brahmans, temples, and charitable institutions such as cattirams (chatrams/choultries -- feeding houses). Indeed, the historiography of south India is dependent principally on epigraphical records of grants such as these, publically proclaimed because of the merit which accrued to the donors and because of the centrality of these gifts to the ideology of kingship. One of the fundamental requirements of Indian kingship was that the king be a munificent provider of fertile lands for Brahmans who would study and chant the Vedas, for temples which were the centers of pūja worship and festival occasions, and for cattirams which provided sustenance for itinerant Brahmans and pilgrims. The merit (punyam) of the king could be shared by all those who protected the gift; as this belief was put in a Pudukkottai copper plate:

Those who respect the above rights and see that they are continued properly will be blessed with the punyam of bathing in the Ganges, of feeding many thousands of Brahmans, and of pleasing God. He who makes a grant will find a place in the world of the stars. He who continues it will find a place near God who is above the world of the stars. He who continues a grant will be blessed thrice as much as he who makes a grant. But he who destroys one of the grants will not be blessed even for the grants which he might make.

Small wonder then that kings had a tendency to take special care to preserve gifts of this sort.

Perhaps most special of all were grants to learned Brahmins for their maintenance. As the copper plate put it: "Poison is not poison but a Brahman's property is. For poison will take the life only of he who drinks it. But a Brahman's property will take the life of one's descendants for three generations."<sup>100</sup> Inam lands held by Brahmins were called carvamāṇiyam (sarvamāṇiem), curōttiriyam (shrotriem), pattavirtti (bhattavirthi), arttamāṇiyam (ardhamāṇiem), and cāturpākam (chaturbhagam, or chaturbhogam). Shortly before the Inam Settlement there were fifty-six whole villages classified as Brahmadēyam, in all some 44,899 acres.<sup>101</sup> Some of the grants were engraved on copper plates;<sup>102</sup> others were written orders on cadjan leaves, many of which were preserved in the palace office. As stated above, these grants were almost always considered to be irrevocable and hereditary, except when the bona fides of the initial grant or of the succession were questioned, perhaps culturally acceptable forms of revocation. Although in the nineteenth century many of these lands had small quit-rents assessed on them, brahmadēyam rights included the usufruct of waste land (purampoku), forests, minerals, etc. within the boundaries of the lands. Like mirāsi, in most cases the land was initially granted in shares to specified families. These shares were often divided into percentages of shares as increasing numbers of pañkalis succeeded to the estate as well as when shares were bought and sold.<sup>103</sup> Even where proper succession could not be certified, the enfranchisement of brahmadēyam inams under the terms of the settlement only entailed a quit-rent of one eighth the full assessment, and many Brahman ināmdārs, particularly those who looked to the towns and cities

for education and employment, actually welcomed the entry of their holdings into a proprietary land market.<sup>104</sup> A second type of inām for Brahmins was for the performance of some specific service, most often for teaching the vedas (vētavirtti). In one Pudukkottai inām, 1424 kulies of wet land were granted for the teaching of the R̥g and Yajur Vedas. The inām was not hereditary, that is it was not passed patrilineally, though it was meant to be passed on from one learned Brahmin to the next.<sup>105</sup>

The second category of religious and charitable ināms was that of dharmadāyam, gifts for the performance of dharma, usually for cattirams which provided food and drink for itinerant pilgrims and Brahmins. Several major copper plates recorded grants from the Rājā, Vijaya Raghunātha Tondaiman Bahadur (1789-1807), to individuals for the establishment and maintenance of cattirams.<sup>106</sup> The inscriptions, which began with panegyric prefaces (prasastis) to the Vijayanagar sovereigns, included grants of land in different villages, dues such as makamai, other endowments such as oil from the vāniyas (oil-pressers), vessels, cows, sheep, and specified rights to irrigational facilities. Like the Brahmadēya grants, these gifts were meant to last forever:

Until the moon and the sun cease to exist, they are ordered to perform this charity. People can further this charity by their words, by their labor, and by charitable acts (such as adding further endowments); those who do these things will enjoy the merit of a bath in the holy Ganges, as indeed they will reap the benefit of establishing innumerable Siva līṅkas at Ramesvaram. Let no one cause harm to this charity. . . .<sup>107</sup>



At the end of the nineteenth century there were twelve inām villages for the maintenance of state-managed cattirams; these were taken over in 1897 by the state along with the Devastanam (temple establishment) villages. Those institutions managed by private persons for which ināms were granted were settled under the inām rules of 1888. An example of the latter type was the watershed (tannīr pantal) carvamānyam of Naraciman Ayyankār, who testified to the Inām Commission that,

he shared half of his grant with another Pantāram, and that while he gave pure water and buttermilk to thirsty people everyday for three months, the Pantāram gave food prepared from rice and lentils to those who desired it.<sup>108</sup>

Services such as these were continued unenfranchised for the reason that they were considered to be useful, necessary, and properly performed.

Even as the set of services which provided for the daily functioning of temples consisted of discrete endowments in the form of ināms, the institution of the temple was itself supported by inām. Devadāyam lands were held principally by temples and were of two classes: those under the direct management of the state and those under the management of private individuals. The latter, settled under the inām rules and described above, consisted of small parcels of land and other endowments held by pūjaris for maintaining local temples, performing ritual functions and supporting festival calendars. Institutions managed by the State were also of two categories: the first, called inter alia, ulturai ināms, consisted of inām lands in Devastanam villages enjoyed by temple servants, and the second category was that of ināms registered in the name of a temple or of a temple's deity. There were 130 institutions which had State endowments (kattalai), 32 of which were outside the State, called Pararāshtram

Kattalais. Twenty-three of this latter group had money allotments and the other nine had land ināms.<sup>109</sup> The particular ceremonies in the temples funded by these endowments were called Tondaiman Kattalais and were performed in well known temples throughout the south such as Ramesvaram, Madurai, Palni, Trichinopoly, and Tirupati.<sup>110</sup> In 1881 there were 136 Devastanam villages in the state set apart for the support of temples.<sup>111</sup> In 1897, the Cirkar incorporated state-managed Devastanam and charity revenues with state lands, and established a fixed budget for the maintenance expenses of these institutions.<sup>112</sup> The rationale for amalgamation was much the same as had been the case with the development of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Board in Madras Presidency.<sup>113</sup> The new mode of state support for temples meant, according to the Cirkar, that the "pagoda services will be permanently ensured without the chance of fluctuation," and that the "pagodas will be supported permanently relieved of the inconvenience and difficulties of collection of revenue assigned for the purpose."<sup>114</sup> However, the rationalization of temple support caused unexpected problems, such as the insufficiency of fixed allotments when there was inflation of prices, which necessitated a continuing administrative relation between the state and the temples. Indeed, the assumption of this relationship even brought questions of temple respects and honors to the attention of the state, which had to reinstitutionalize modes of dispute arbitration after the traditional authority of the Rājā had begun to erode with the separation of person and office. In other words, the bureaucratization of the state in the late nineteenth century was almost inevitably conjoined with the decline in the importance of the Rājā, at least in part because the inām had symbolized the personal authority of the Rājā. The encroachment of

ideas of bureaucratic rationalization can be seen in the recommendations of the State Devasthanam Committee on the question of temple honors; the Committee suggested that "a record of the existing practice in each temple should be prepared and maintained in each temple as of Pātrams and Parivattams [temple honors] so that the Government may have the benefit of what in law is called pre-appointed evidence."<sup>115</sup> Thus the precedent of law was to replace the precedence of the king, and the structure of political relations was to be reconstituted in a bureaucratic mode in which the king was a mere figurehead. Ironically, all the proposals of the state which were meant to make temple affairs self-regulating had the opposite effect; the history of close relations between the temple and the king was destined to be repeated, only this time with the state standing in for the king.<sup>116</sup>

#### VIII. LAND, KINSHIP, HONOR, AND SERVICE: INAM AS POLITICAL RELATION

We have seen that the alienation of land as inām was not only a natural consequence of the political process but that the political relations developed and maintained through inām were an integral part of the little kingdom. The ultimate political base of any little kingdom in the pre-British period was its military capacity, and this capacity was in turn based on structures of alliance and command, which as we have seen were very highly developed in Pudukkottai. The relationship of the village to the state was not simply predicated on protection, but also on the complex articulation of rights and shares to offices, services, and to the proceeds of the king's share of village production. Although the functioning of the system of alienation often seemed in practice multiplex, ināms did symbolize the personal authority of the king, both because they were given by the king and because they represented a part of

the whole which was symbolized by the king. As such, ināms were to be given, not taken away, except in very rare instances.

The sharing of the king's right to land was thus the key feature of the political system. The king's munificent presence was concretely manifested by the proliferation of temples, Brahmadēyas, and cattirams, by the exemptions granted to all ināmdārs from royal tax, and by the subtraction of the village set of shares to local artisans and servants. But while land rights were central to the institutionalization of kingship, these rights cannot be analyzed apart from other coordinates of political relations. These other coordinates were, principally, kinship, honor, and service. Each of these coordinates was at once a relational trope and a cultural category of entitlement, filiation, and power.<sup>117</sup> As relational tropes they provided a metaphorical language for the expression and specification of political relations, and as cultural categories they explain the centrality of kingship to social relations within the little kingdom.

The variability of the kinship domain in South Asia was first suggested by Leach and Barth.<sup>118</sup> Both argued that kinship and landholding were closely related. Barth noted instances where the loss of land led to loss of social position among the Swat Pathan, and Leach made the case that kinship was really only a way of talking about property relations. Obeyesekere subsequently amended some of Leach's conclusions by noting that while he agreed with Leach that kinship was not a thing in itself, it was neither determined exclusively (or systematically) by property relations nor was it unimportant from a normative perspective. The permeability of kinship as a cultural domain has been more elaborately investigated since then by Inden and Nicholas, who have demonstrated for Bengal not only the inadequacy of the usual affine/consanguine classificatory system but the close interaction of types of relationship such as residence, employment,

and choice of spiritual preceptor with what in the west is more exclusively bounded as kinship per se.<sup>120</sup>

What, then, is the role of kinship in this analysis? From our material, we know that all but one of the Vakappu Cērvai kārars was of the royal sub-caste and had affinal ties with the Rājā, and that the one exception was the result of a political alliance with the Ramnad Cēṭupati, a relation which itself was initially based on affinity; we know that succession to chiefly ināms and to kingship was based on descent and that adoption was used to confirm the descent principle even when, as was usually the case, there was already a collateral relation, and yet that certain subordinate maintenance ināms were based on collaterality with reference to the title-holder; we know that collateral relations were special but that they more often than not -- and certainly more often than affinal relations -- yielded conflict; and we know that relationships between amarakārars and Cērvai kārars were expressed by the kinship term "inavari". In this context it might be mentioned that relations between the more important pālaiyakārars -- including the Tondaimans -- and the Nāyakas of Madurai had been expressed by the term, "kumaravarkkam", meaning the group of sons or princes. Thus, political relations were variably, but almost always mediated by factors such as descent, collaterality, affinity, and kinship metaphor. Whatever the cultural domain of kinship (and this is a question which demands considerably more research in south India), it is clear that the domain of kinship language included relationships that western observers would classify as simply political.<sup>121</sup>

We have seen that political relations were also mediated by honor. The importance of honor, both to our understanding of the south Indian temple and to ideas of sovereignty and kingship, has been identified and

impressively documented by Arjun Appadurai and Carol Breckenridge.<sup>122</sup> These scholars have convincingly demonstrated that honors, and in particular the exchanges associated with honor in the context of temple worship, played a constitutive role in social relations. Temple honors (mariyātai) are the redistributed leavings of the deity, and in the context of the south Indian temple denote, "a whole series of objects, actions and transactions, linking the deity with its servants, worshippers and protectors, whose substance, order and context, provides a public code for the demarcation of status."<sup>123</sup> But honor does not simply mark the relationship of deity and devotee, nor even the status relations of respective devotees. Rather:

. . . the receipt of specific honours, in any given context, renders authoritative the individual's share (pañku) in the temple conceived as a redistributive process. Such a share would be composed of: the right to offer service (kainkaryam) to the deity, either through endowment or through prescribed ritual function; the right to move the resources allocated for the specific ritual event; the right to command the relevant persons involved in the actualization of the given ritual; the right to perform some single part of a complex ritual event; and, finally, the right to worship the deity, by simply witnessing the ritual.<sup>124</sup>

Thus, for example, the hidden agenda of our mirāsīdār plaintiff becomes clear, as we realize that the respects the mirāsīdār sought entitled him to privileged participation in the redistributive process of the temple; as such, the right to receive these respects was considered to be the

most important, and distinctive, aspect of office (even as the right to offer service, as in the temple, was linked fundamentally to respects). This was no isolated case. Appadurai and Breckenridge have argued that the temple constituted an area in which local leadership was not only accorded but, even more importantly, contested.<sup>125</sup> That these contests had to be arbitrated by the king (or state) was illustrative of the incapacity of the temple to regulate its own affairs, and revealed the fundamental nature of temple-state relations.<sup>126</sup>

More problematic, however, is the interpretation of the relationship of temple honors to the honors (here *pirutus*) distributed by the king. Breckenridge has argued that the temple, and in particular, the relation of the king to the deity in the temple, was the principal source of kingly authority in south India.<sup>127</sup> While this argument explains the importance attached to temple control by kings, and the constitutive function of kings with respect to social relations in the context of temple worship, I find it less satisfactory when attempting to understand political relations within the little kingdom. The nature of political authority in south India was rather more complex. The origin stories of the Tondaiman rulers and of many other south Indian little kings point principally to military prowess and relations not with deities but with superordinate kings, most prominently those of the Vijayanagar dynasty, as sources of authority.<sup>128</sup> While the development of temples and temple worship has gone hand in hand with that of kingship in south India, one of the features of this twin development has been the attribution of divine qualities to kings, at least from the eighth century on.<sup>129</sup> The relations of kings and deities were transactional within the temple (and as such the temple was a source of great honor for the king), but outside

of the temple the relationship was one more of homology. That is, the symbols of kings and deities were the same, and redistributive processes centered around both in similar ways. Paradigms and sources of authority were not context-free. While the deity was paradigmatically the sovereign of the temple,<sup>130</sup> the king was sovereign in his own right in the kingdom. Even this contextualization, however, is not so neat as it sounds, for although each domain existed in itself it did not exist apart from the other.

Following from the theoretical statements of Appadurai and Breckenridge, I suggest a revised definition of honor which could apply equally to temple honors and kingly *pirutus*. Using a Piercian semiotic scheme,<sup>131</sup> honors, or *pirutus*, might be seen as important iconically in that they were sentient representations of authority which were seen to inhere in the nature of individuals, families, and offices; they were important indexically in that they ranked individuals and marked social relations; and they were significant symbolically in that the insignias and emblems had cultural meanings and as such were displayed and transacted in particular relational contexts. To take the analysis one step further, it must be remembered that *pirutus* were not only emblems, but titles as well. The importance of titles was noted earlier; they signified office, they expressed a relation to the king (as indeed titles in general were often relational by virtue of being recognized as given by someone as well as denoting a specific relation), and they signified caste, lineage, and locality. The relationship of titles to political and social relations on the one hand and to cultural ideas of the person is an area for further scholarly attention.

Finally, service was an important factor in political relations,



though not in the way it was interpreted by members of the 1888 Inam Settlement Commission. Service was seen by the settlement officers as the key variable which determined the nature and degree of state intervention with ināms. Thus, an inām was classified as a "service inām" if it was decided that it had been granted as "remuneration" for service. Service ināms were to be continued only if the service was seen to be necessary, and properly performed; non-service ināms were seen to be for maintenance and thus were usually left alone. The desire to resume as much inām land as possible led to a classificational compulsiveness in which the attendance of Cervaikārars at state festivals such as Dassara or royal marriages was dubbed a service. Service should rather be seen as related to the cultural perception of the king as a deity;<sup>132</sup> the chieftains served the king because this privilege was accorded them, and as such they were entitled to a special royal relationship, which included an important place in state ritual. In the village context, local artisans and servants were entitled by their inām to serve the local deity along with the temple structure which organized worship, and the patrons who were for the most part locally dominant Kallars. It is in this sense that Hocart was correct to insist on the priestly nature of service, and to render the concept of equal applicability to the village, kingdom, and temple. Indeed, service was central to the position of the little kings themselves, who in their origin stories dwelt repeatedly on their services performed for great kings, usually of Vijayanagar, and pointed to these services as principal sources of pride and authority.

The changes of the nineteenth century, partial and incomplete though they were, involved the replacement of this relational political system with a bureaucratic one in which offices, roles, and precedents

became preeminent. Symptomatic of this change, the office of Rājā was separated from the state, inām land was classified and introduced into an independent proprietary market, the honors constitutive of office became detached from their infrastructural base, kinship was redefined as an autonomous domain, and service was linked to a classificational system designed to justify and facilitate the resumption of alienated land. These changes, though only hinted at here, are interesting in their characterization of the nature of British impact in India, as well as because they help to highlight various aspects of pre-British India. The little kingdom, defined as a redistributive process in which the sharing of rights to land was the fundamental expression of the relation of the king to his kingdom, and constituted by the relational coordinates of "kinship", "honor", and "service", thus provides a useful and historically central context in which the pre-modern Indian political order can be viewed.

## FOOTNOTES

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